Abstract for U.S. Patent Application No. 09/536518 (Our ref: 109779.135 US1)

A method of using a communication network so that a large multitude of users may simultaneously compete in a skill-based contest includes identifying a large multitude of contestants; grouping the contestants into subsets according to group criteria; and matching contestants within the subsets into subcompetitions. The method also includes, for each subcompetition, presenting a competition task over the communications network to the contestants of the subcompetition; monitoring responses to the competition task from each subcompetition and determining a subcompetition status of each contestant in the subcompetition; and grouping at least some of the contestants according to at least one of the group criteria or subcompetition status. One or more steps are repeated until there is a unique winner of the contest. The contest begins for all contestants at a fixed start time and converges to the unique winner in a fixed, short amount of time after the start time.